

OIE Project Brief: Capacity building and surveillance for Ebola Virus Disease (EVD)

Background

The recent West African Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) epidemic underscored the risks linked to inadequate disease detection, prevention and response mechanisms, and the importance to strengthen public and animal health systems. The epidemic also raised a series of unanswered questions and defining challenges – at the human-animal interface – that need to be brought into the spotlight so as to reduce the vulnerability of societies to infectious disease threats that spread across national and international borders.

With the objective of contributing to the aforementioned endeavour, in December 2016, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) received a **grant from the European Union** to implement the project on 'Capacity building and surveillance for Ebola Virus Disease (EVD)'. In order to implement this project, the OIE has teamed up with the *Centre de coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement* (CIRAD), *Institut de Recherche pour le Développement* (IRD), *Institut Pasteur* and its International Network (IPIN).

Project

Through the promotion and adoption of a 'One Health' approach to detect, prevent, control and respond to new and devastating disease threats, this project will support an enhanced and coordinated response to the (re-) emergence of zoonotic pathogens and address the ongoing efforts to prevent endemic zoonotic pathogens. As a base, this project will use the OIE's internationally adopted standards with an emphasis on peer-reviewed science to address and overcome existing institutional gaps, implement surveillance measures, and align science within the community context and to the epidemiological data.

Project Objectives

The **General Objective** is the strengthening of national and regional early detection systems in wildlife in West and Central Africa using a 'One Health' and multi-sectoral approach to better detect, differentiate and prevent future EVD outbreaks or outbreaks of other emerging zoonotic pathogens.

The main **Specific Objectives** are:

Specific Objective 1: Building institutional and 'One Health' capacity through teaching and training;

- Sub-objective 1.1: Increased reporting into the OIE World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS);
- Sub-objective 1.2: Alignment of human and animal health surveillance systems;

Specific Objective 2: Contribute to increasing the communities' awareness of zoonotic diseases;

Specific Objective 3: Reinforcing zoonotic disease surveillance protocols through field investigations and improved diagnostic assays;

- Sub-objective 3.1: Developing predictive models and risk assessment tools based on understanding of the transmission cycle, including potential wildlife reservoirs for Viral Haemorrhagic Fevers (VHF viruses) and environmental factors; and
- Sub-objective 3.2: Identifying and assessing through epidemiological investigations, major health risks (real or perceived) associated with wildlife, bushmeat and human activities in Africa.

Project Leader

The OIE is the intergovernmental organisation responsible for animal health and veterinary public health worldwide. As of 2016, the OIE has 180 Member Countries, permanent relationships with over 70 other international and regional organisations as well as regional and sub-regional offices in Africa. The OIE was considered uniquely placed to

coordinate this programme given its network of 313 Reference Centres in more than 40 countries, collaborations with the world's leading academic and research institutes and scientists, and the permanent support of national Veterinary Services' networks, including national Delegates to the OIE, eight OIE national Focal Points in each country and field personnel. The OIE's mandates are: to ensure the transparency in the global animal disease situation; to collect, analyse and disseminate veterinary scientific information; and to strengthen the capacities of national Veterinary Services.

Project Partners

The OIE has established a partnership (sub-grants) with the following leading scientific institutions to ensure the implementation of a transdisciplinary and scientifically sound project:

- *Centre de coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD);*
- *Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD);*
- *Institut Pasteur and its International Network (IPIN).*

The OIE and its partners will work through the national Veterinary Services in each target country, and support them with external expertise to conduct safe and statistically based investigations and sampling. At the same time, the national Veterinary Services will receive training and support in capacity so that they can continue to monitor the animal reservoir(s) once the project is complete. The national Veterinary Services in each target country will be encouraged to work closely with their public health counterparts throughout the project.

Project Duration and Location

The project will run over the course of five years (60 months). The contract was effective as of 15 January 2017.

Capacity building efforts (i.e., PVS Pathway, IHR-PVS Pathway National Bridging Workshops, and OIE Focal Point trainings) will be undertaken by the OIE to improve the Veterinary Services' capacities to detect, control and prevent animal diseases targeting the African continent.

The project partners will conduct specific capacity building efforts and field or laboratory studies in the following ten (10) West and Central African countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Liberia, Republic of the Congo, Senegal and Sierra Leone. Other OIE Reference Centres and partners' laboratories based in Belgium, France, Germany, Zimbabwe and Hong Kong will also provide additional technical support and training.

Governance of the Project

The OIE will identify and form a Project Management Team to implement, manage and monitor the project, including coordination of all project implementers and their activities. This team will be composed of staff from OIE Headquarters, the OIE Regional Representation for Africa (Mali) and the OIE Sub-Regional Representation for Southern Africa (Botswana).

Strategic and scientific oversight will be provided by an Advisory Committee and a Programme Committee. These committees will meet in-person at least every 12 months.

The role of the Advisory Committee is to: inform on project implementation, orientations and strategic axes; disseminate information among the invited implementers and beneficiary countries representatives concerning the project and other complementary projects being simultaneously implemented by the project implementers; and ensure and develop complementarities between projects.

The objective of the Programme Committee is to monitor the progress of the project, and therefore: review investigation procedures and protocols (captures, analysis, diagnosis, etc.); oversee field activities; assess project progress of the project's implementation; review the interpretation and analysis of results; and support the ways in which the use of the results (communication, publications, etc.) can be optimised.